FACTSHEET: Red Light Cameras

1. Why use a Red Light Camera System?

Red light running is one of the major causes of crashes, deaths, and injuries at signalized intersections in the United States and in El Paso. There are a number of studies that RLC can be an effective countermeasure to prevent red light running to such an extent that the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration is promoting red light cameras as one of its identified priority, market-ready safety technologies.

Recent review of the RLC found there is a preponderance of evidence that RLC improve the overall safety of intersections. In some situations, rear-end crashes have increased in RLC monitored intersections but to a lesser extent than the reduction of angle crashes. Literature recently published by the FHWA indicates right angle crashes decreased by nearly 25% while rear end crashes increased by 15%. The study also concluded the negative effects of the rear end accidents is negated not only by the positive reduction of angle crashes but the economic losses suffered in angle crashes is greater than rear end crashes. This is because the crashes caused by motorists running reds lights, are more deadly and damaging than other types of crashes at signalized intersections.

It must be noted the problem of increased rear end collisions can be reduced by site selection, warnings, and education. RLC should be placed at intersections with a high ratio of right-angle crashes to rear-end crashes. The presence of warning signs in advance of photo-enforced intersections and on approaches into an area where red light camera systems are used for red light running can reduce rear-end collisions. Also a public awareness campaign prior to implementation of the RLC would prove beneficial in reducing rear end collisions.

2. Do all studies support the use of red light cameras?

The U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration acknowledges that most studies are tainted by methodological difficulties. The bulk of conclusions and studies though support the conclusion that red light cameras reduce angle collisions. The FHWA supports the use of the RLC.

3. Is this a permanent or pilot program?

The city's RLC Program will initially be implemented as a pilot program for a period of one year at which time it will be reevaluated to determine if it meets the goals set forth.

Goals of the program include:

1) Reduce instances of angle collisions at selected intersections.
2) Reduce instances of red light running at selected intersections.

4. **What are the economic benefits for the City? Do red light systems make money for the city? What will the cost to tax payers be as a result of the RLC?**

   Never during the planning of the Red Light Camera systems was the program considered to be a potential source of revenue for the City. The proposed RFP indicates that the City prefers vendor proposals that guarantee cost neutrality; that is, revenues from the citations will match the cost of the vendor's monthly service fees. The vendor will absorb any costs overrun; therefore the taxpayer will not suffer any increased taxes resulting from the need to fund the program.

   There will obviously be economic benefits to the city. The expected reduction in accidents and injuries in itself is an economic benefit. If additional revenue beyond what is being charged by the vendor is realized, this revenue will be used as directed by City Council.

5. **Do insurance companies profit from the RLC? Will our insurance rates increase?**

   Insurance companies will not profit from the issuance of red light citations issued at RLC controlled intersections, as this is a civil violation, not a traffic violation. Because of this, violations are not reported to the Texas Department of Public Safety for inclusion in the violators driving history. The community benefits economically if accidents are reduced by implementation of the RLC. Insurance rates are determined in part by the accident rate per traffic rate within a community. Reduced accidents means lower rates for the community. The insurance companies also will benefit when accidents are reduced due to lower payouts for damage and injuries. This will also be beneficial to the consumer.

6. **How will intersections be selected for placement of the red light cameras?**

   The City intends to have red light photo enforcement equipment installed at intersections where data has shown a high level of violations and/or a frequency of right-angle collisions likely caused by red light running.

   Once these intersections are selected, they will be noted and identified to the public as intersections that use red-light cameras.

   The police department is conducting various studies at this time to determine where to place the RLC. These studies will include total accidents at the intersections and as compared to traffic flow through the intersections. We will also request the selected vendor work with the City to determine candidate intersections, chosen in part based on quantitative assessment of the frequency of red light violations and collisions. As part of this process, vendors will develop baseline data for one to four selected approaches at each candidate intersection by monitoring for a minimum of 16 consecutive hours to quantify the frequency of red light violations during that period. These data will support both intersection and approach selection and will serve as baseline information for project evaluation purposes.

7. What other pilot programs are being discussed to reduce red light running?

Red light camera systems are but one method of monitoring and enforcing red light violations. There are other measures that should be used in conjunction with the RLC.

The Traffic Engineering Department is currently examining intersection-engineering improvements. These improvements or changes include retiming of the traffic signals if appropriate for the traffic conditions. The changes involve the length of yellow and all-red interval times. It must be remembered though that lengthening the yellow interval only reduces the number of inadvertent red light violations while the red clearance interval is not intended to reduce red light running; rather it is a safety measure. Other measures that deserve review include:

1. Additional use of signalized intersection warning signs and lights.
2. Adjusting approach speeds.
3. Advance vehicle detection systems that hold green signals for an extended time. This allows motorists at the back of a line, under light traffic conditions, to traverse a signalized intersection.
4. Removal of street parking around busy intersections to enhance driver visibility.
5. A public education campaign can also assist motorist in understanding the safety issues inherent to red light running. The program should be designed to combat red light running by communicating the seriousness of the violation.

8. Are Red Light Cameras a violation of our right to privacy?

Photographing vehicles whose drivers run red lights doesn't violate anyone's protected privacy interest. The City's red light cameras will record only the rears of vehicles, not the occupants. Besides, driving is a regulated activity on public roads. Neither the law nor common sense suggests that drivers shouldn't be observed on the road or that their violations shouldn't be recorded.

9. What happens when a motorist runs a red light at one of these intersections?

For the first 30 days that these cameras are implemented, the City will issue 'warnings only' for first-time violations.